

**Subpart 12.05—Able Seamen****§ 12.05-1 Certification required.**

(a) Every person employed in a rating as able seaman on any United States vessel requiring certificated able seamen, before signing articles of agreement, shall present to the master, his or her certificate as able seaman (issued in the form of a merchant mariner's document).

(b) No certificate as able seaman is required of any person employed on any tug or towboat on the bays and sounds connected directly with the seas, or on any unrigged vessel except seagoing barges or tank barges.

(c) The following categories of able seaman are established:

- (1) Able Seaman—Any Waters, Unlimited.
- (2) Able Seaman—Limited.
- (3) Able Seaman—Special.
- (4) Able Seaman—Special (OSV).

[CGD 80-131, 45 FR 69240, Oct. 20, 1980]

**§ 12.05-3 General requirements.**

(a) To qualify for certification as able seaman an applicant must:

- (1) Be at least 18 years of age;
- (2) Pass the prescribed physical examination;
- (3) Meet the sea service or training requirements set forth in this part;
- (4) Pass an examination demonstrating ability as an able seaman and lifeboatman; and,
- (5) Speak and understand the English language as would be required in performing the general duties of able seaman and during an emergency aboard ship.

(b) An STCW endorsement valid for any period on or after February 1, 2002, will be issued or renewed only when the candidate for certification as an able seaman also produces satisfactory evidence, on the basis of assessment of a practical demonstration of skills and abilities, of having achieved or maintained within the previous 5 years the minimum standards of competence for the following 4 areas of basic safety:

- (1) Personal survival techniques as set out in table A-VI/1-1 of the STCW Code (incorporated by reference in § 12.01-3).

(2) Fire prevention and fire-fighting as set out in table A-VI/1-2 of the STCW Code.

(3) Elementary first aid as set out in table A-VI/1-3 of the STCW Code.

(4) Personal safety and social responsibilities as set out in table A-VI/1-4 of the STCW Code.

(c) An STCW endorsement valid for any period on or after February 1, 2002, will be issued or renewed only when the candidate for certification as able seaman meets the requirements of STCW Regulation II/4 and of Section A-II/4 of the STCW Code, if the candidate will be serving as a rating forming part of the navigational watch on a seagoing ship of 500 GT or more.

[CGD 80-131, 45 FR 69240, Oct. 20, 1980, as amended by CGD 95-062, 62 FR 34537, June 26, 1997; CGD 95-062, 62 FR 40140, July 25, 1997; USCG-1999-5610, 67 FR 66068, Oct. 30, 2002]

**§ 12.05-5 Physical requirements.**

(a) All applicants for a certificate of service as able seaman shall be required to pass a physical examination given by a medical officer of the United States Public Health Service and present to the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection, a certificate executed by the Public Health Service Officer. Such certificate shall attest to the applicant's acuity of vision, color sense, hearing, and general physical condition. In exceptional cases where an applicant would be put to great inconvenience or expense to appear before a medical officer of the United States Public Health Service, the physical examination and certification may be made by any other reputable physician.

(b) The medical examination for an able seaman is the same as for an original license as a deck officer as set forth in § 10.205 of this subchapter. If the applicant is in possession of an unexpired deck license, the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection, may waive the requirement for a physical examination.

[CGFR 65-50, 30 FR 16640, Dec. 30, 1965, as amended by USCG-1998-4442, 63 FR 52189, Sept. 30, 1998]

**§ 12.05-7 Service or training requirements.**

- (a) The minimum service required to qualify an applicant for the various

categories of able seaman is as listed in this paragraph.

(1) Able Seaman—Any Waters, Unlimited. Three years service on deck on vessels operating on the oceans or the Great Lakes.

(2) Able Seaman—Limited. Eighteen months service on deck in vessels of 100 gross tons or over which operate in a service not exclusively confined to the rivers and smaller inland lakes of the United States.

(3) Able Seaman—Special. Twelve months service on deck on vessels operating on the oceans, or the navigable waters of the United States including the Great Lakes.

(4) Able Seaman—Special (OSV). Six months service on deck on vessels operating on the oceans, or the navigable waters of the United States including the Great Lakes.

(5) After July 31, 1998, to receive an STCW endorsement for service as a “rating forming part of a navigational watch” on a seagoing ship of 500 GT or more, the applicant’s seagoing service must include training and experience associated with navigational watchkeeping and involve the performance of duties carried out under the direct supervision of the master, the officer in charge of the navigational watch, or a qualified rating forming part of a navigational watch. The training and experience must be sufficient to establish that the candidate has achieved the standard of competence prescribed in table A-II/4 of the STCW Code (incorporated by reference in §12.01-3), in accordance with the methods of demonstrating competence and the criteria for evaluating competence specified in that table.

NOTE: Employment considerations for the various categories of able seaman are contained in §157.20-15 of this chapter.

(b) Training programs approved by the Commanding Officer, National Maritime Center, may be substituted for the required periods of service on deck as follows:

(1) A graduate of a school ship may be rated as able seaman upon satisfactory completion of the course of instruction. For this purpose, *school ship* is interpreted to mean an institution which offers a complete course of instruction, including a period of at sea

training, in the skills appropriate to the rating of able seaman.

(2) Training programs, other than those classified as a school ship, may be substituted for up to one third of the required service on deck. The service/training ratio for each program is determined by the Commanding Officer, National Maritime Center, who may allow a maximum of three days on deck service credit for each day of instruction.

(c) A certificate of service as *Able Seaman, Great Lakes—18 months’ service*, is considered equivalent to a certificate of service as *Able Seaman—Limited*.

(d) A certificate of service as Able Seaman with the following route, vessel, or time restrictions is considered equivalent to a certificate of service as *Able Seaman—Special*:

(1) *Any waters—12 months.*

(2) *Tugs and towboats—any waters.*

(3) *Bays and sounds—12 months, vessels 500 gross tons or under not carrying passengers.*

(4) *Seagoing barges—12 months.*

(e) An individual holding a certificate of service endorsed as noted in paragraphs (c) or (d) of this section may have his or her merchant mariner’s document endorsed with the equivalent category, upon request.

[CGD 80-131, 45 FR 69240, Oct. 20, 1980, as amended by CGD 95-072, 60 FR 50460, Sept. 29, 1995; CGD 95-062, 62 FR 34537, June 26, 1997; CGD 95-062, 62 FR 40140, July 25, 1997; USCG-1998-4442, 63 FR 52189, Sept. 30, 1998; USCG-1999-5610, 67 FR 66068, Oct. 30, 2002]

#### § 12.05-9 Examination and demonstration of ability.

(a) Before an applicant is certified as an able seaman, he or she shall prove to the satisfaction of the Coast Guard by oral or other means of examination, and by actual demonstration, his or her knowledge of seamanship and the ability to carry out effectively all the duties that may be required of an able seaman, including those of a lifeboatman. The applicant shall demonstrate that he or she:

(1) Has been trained in all the operations connected with the launching of lifeboats and liferafts, and in the use of oars;

(2) Is acquainted with the practical handling of boats; and